

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Rightist Ron Paul draws support in '08 campaign  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Int'l labor conference boosts effort for release of Cuban Five

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER  
AND WENDY LYONS

TIJUANA, Mexico—"We cannot trust the justice system in the United States to gain freedom for the five Cubans imprisoned in that country's jails," said Irma Sehwerert, the mother of René González. "We have no illusions that after Bush this will change. We have to get out the facts on who the five are."

About 80 people heard Sehwerert speak at the opening of the Cuba/Venezuela/Mexico/North America Labor Conference, which took place here December 7-9.

Trade unionists, academics, students, and political activists from several countries took part in the conference. It was sponsored by the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange and a number of union and political organizations.

The Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, René González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González—were arrested by FBI cops in 1998 and convicted for "conspiracy to commit espionage" and other frame-up charges. Hernández was also convicted on false charges of "conspiracy to commit murder."

The five Cuban revolutionaries had been tracking the activity of counter-

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## CIA admits use of torture, justifies it as part of 'war on terrorism'

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

The use of torture by the U.S. government in its "global war on terrorism" has received renewed attention after reports that CIA tapes of the 2002 "interrogation" of alleged al-Qaeda member Abu Zubaydah were destroyed. Retired CIA agent John Kiriakou, who led the team that captured and interrogated Zubaydah, recently told the press they had used "waterboarding" to extract a confession.

Waterboarding is a torture method in which a prisoner is strapped to an inclined board, head down, his face is covered with cellophane or cloth, and water is poured over him. It causes the person to choke and feel he is drowning.

"This was a policy decision that was made at the White House, with concurrence from the National Security Council and Justice Department," Kiriakou told NBC news December 11. Kiriakou acknowledged that waterboarding is torture, but defended its use. He said it forced Zubaydah, after holding out for weeks, to break down in less than 35 seconds. "From that day on, he answered every question," Kiriakou said.

"I have no doubt that the infor-

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## Killings by Chicago cops spark protests

Demonstrators: convict, jail guilty police



Militant/Jorge Lertora

December 8 protest at site where Chicago cops killed Aaron Harrison August 6

BY LAURA ANDERSON  
AND BETSY FARLEY

CHICAGO—A series of fatal shootings by the police here has spurred protests calling for the conviction of the cops involved. Most of those killed have been Black; at least two were Latino.

Dozens protested December 8 to demand justice for Aaron Harrison, who killed by cops in August. A week earlier, friends and relatives of Freddie Wilson spoke out at a hearing to demand that police be held accountable for his killing.

Police claim they shot Wilson, 34, after he threatened them during a November 13 traffic stop. They say a gun was recovered. But witnesses report differently.

Grace Hazzard, who was leaving a nearby record shop, told the *Chicago Sun-Times* Wilson "never made it to his car." She added that she did not see Wilson with a gun.

Andre Grant, an attorney for family members who have filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the city, said wit-

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## Sales of 'Sankara Speaks' in French near 500 in 3 months

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

TORONTO—In less than three months, supporters of Pathfinder in Belgium, France, and Canada have sold almost 500 copies of the new, expanded edition of *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. They are now mapping out plans to reach the 1,000 mark.

The collection, published in fall 2007 in French and English, contains 30 speeches and interviews. It is the best record of the course Sankara charted as leader of the revolution that swept the West African country of Burkina Faso from 1983-1987.

Under Sankara's leadership, the revolutionary government mobilized the toilers to transform exploitative relations on the land, to combat the oppression of women, to free themselves from the imperialist yoke, and solidarize with others engaged in that fight internationally. Peasants, workers, women, and youth carried out literacy drives, sank wells, planted trees, built dams, and erected housing. Sankara was murdered in the coup that overthrew the revolutionary government in

1987.

As of December 17, 318 copies of the French edition, *Thomas Sankara parle*, had been sold in France, 130 in Canada, and 43 in Belgium—a total of 491.

Sales of the book in France include 219 to 48 bookstores. Another 33 books were purchased at events in Clermont-Ferrand, Paris, and Lille marking the 20th anniversary of Sankara's assassination. In Belgium, 31 copies of the book have been sold to 15 bookstores in five different cities.

In Canada, 105 copies have been sold to individuals and 24 to 10 bookstores and libraries, mainly in Quebec. These include 31 copies sold at the Pathfinder booth during the recent Montreal Book Fair and 34 at two Sankara events in Montreal and Toronto in October. Other copies were sold from street tables, on the job, and at political events in Montreal and Toronto.

Derek Jeffers from Paris and Erik Wils from Antwerp, Belgium, contributed to this article.

## Capitalist rivalries mark Bali summit on global warming

BY CINDY JAQUITH

A United Nations-sponsored conference on global warming concluded December 15 when the U.S. government and its imperialist rivals agreed on a vague, watered-down resolution to reduce carbon emissions. Representatives of 190 governments and environmental activists met in Bali, Indonesia, to open talks on replacing the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on air pollution and climate control, due to expire in 2012, with a new international agreement.

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases gradually raise the temperature of the earth's atmosphere over the long term. In 1997, officials of the major industrialized countries met in Kyoto, Japan, and pledged that by the year 2012 they would cut greenhouse gases by 5 percent below 1990 levels.

The heart of the Kyoto treaty, however, is the "cap and trade" scheme that lets the owners of industry and agribusiness evade emissions standards and allows governments that reduce emissions below the cap to sell the difference to others as an unused

"right" to pollute. In Europe, for example, caps were set so high that in 2006 many European Union (EU) governments ended up with "excess" carbon credits, which they sold as a commodity on the world market.

Both Kyoto and the latest negotiations were marked by the economic competition between capitalist governments. In 2001, U.S. president George Bush refused to ratify the Kyoto agreement, claiming that the

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# Meeting defends Cuban 5

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revolutionary groups in Florida that have carried out murderous assaults in Cuba with Washington’s complicity. Convicted in a 2001 federal trial in Miami, they were given sentences ranging from 15 years to a double life term.

“In Cuba we have dignity,” Schwerert said, “and I can assure you they [the U.S. government] will never break our dignity.”

In an interview with the *Militant*, Schwerert said that as a youth she had lived in the United States for nine years. Her family emigrated from Cuba in 1952, when she was 14, and lived in Chicago and Indiana.

“I saw the racist treatment of Blacks and Latinos,” she said. “When I was in high school there was a racist gang. One of the Black students broke his pencil, and when I gave him a pencil there were threats against me from the gang. My mother pulled me out of school and sent me to a Catholic school.”

Sehwerert married Cuban-born Cándido René González. She got a job in a factory working alongside many Puerto Ricans. When she tried to help a pregnant co-worker get time off to visit her husband, who was hospitalized, the boss said, “She cries too much, give her a pacifier.” Sehwerert began discussions with fellow workers on the need for a union. Her husband worked in an Indiana steel mill and took part in a long strike in 1959.

Both of them became partisans of the revolutionary movement in Cuba to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. They joined the July 26 Movement in Chicago and later the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. “I remember the demonstration we had in the streets

of Chicago during the U.S. invasion of Cuba [at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961], chanting ‘Hands Off Cuba!’” In 1961 she returned to Cuba to work in support of the revolution.

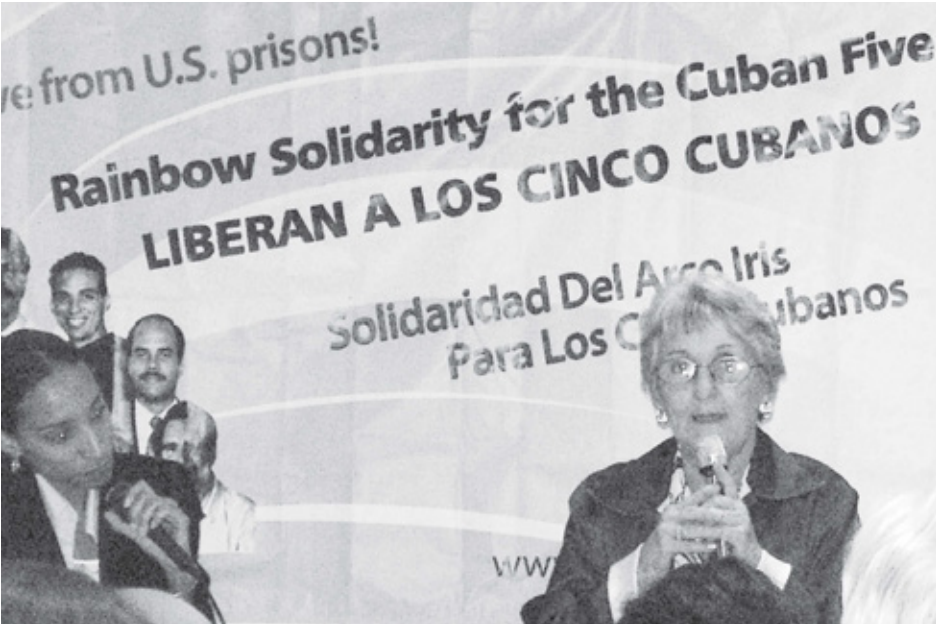
“Keep getting out the truth about Cuba in the United States,” she said. “I know that many working people there can have a deep sense of solidarity when they know the truth.”

### Other struggles

Unionists came to the conference from both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border, along with trade union representatives from Cuba and Venezuela. In addition to discussing how to mobilize support for the five Cubans framed up in the United States, conference participants discussed the sharpening class struggle in Venezuela, the exploitative trade practices imposed by U.S. imperialism on Latin American countries, and the fight to defend undocumented workers in the United States from raids and deportations.

“We need your solidarity,” said Osvaldo Vera, national coordinator of the Socialist Bolivarian Workers Force (FSBT) in Venezuela. “At this moment the most important solidarity is to learn about the reality of what is going on in our country, because it is different from what is presented by TV internationally. It’s a struggle by peasants to own their own land, by workers for health care and to lower the infant mortality rate, and by all Venezuelans to be able to study.”

Raymundo Navarro Fernández, international relations director of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), addressed the need for solidarity with Venezuela and other nations facing imperialist threats and



Militant/Chris Hoepfner  
**Irma Sehwerert (right), mother of René González, one of Cuban Five, speaks at December 7–9 Tijuana conference. “We cannot trust U.S. justice system to free the five,” she said.**

assaults. Referring to Cuba’s internationalist aid around the world, he said, “We don’t give away things we don’t need—we share what we have.”

Hugo Camacho, an organizer for the UNITE HERE union, told the *Militant* about a strike over wages that started in September against Prudential Overall Supply in Southern California. He appealed for solidarity with the striking workers.

One of the conference participants was Elvira Arellano, a Mexican-born worker who became a well-known spokesperson in the fight against deportations. “I learned about the Cuban Five in Chicago. It’s very unjust because they are trying to make them look like terrorists, when they are human beings defending the freedom of their people.” Arellano, a former air-

plane cleaner, had lived in the United States since 1997. FBI agents arrested her at her home in December 2002 as part of a raid against workers at Chicago’s O’Hare airport for allegedly using false Social Security numbers. She took sanctuary in a church with her son Saúl, a U.S. citizen, and refused to report for deportation. She was eventually deported on August 19.

Arellano now lives in Michoacán, Mexico, and continues to fight for the legalization of the undocumented. “If the Mexican government won’t act, families in Mexico are committed to fight for dignity and respect. We are collecting signatures and hope to have thousands for May 1, 2008.”

*Arlene Rubinstein and Gerardo Sánchez contributed to this article.*

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# ‘Prosecute killer cops’

**Continued from front page**  
nesses report Wilson was walking to his car when he was confronted by police. “He believed that he was being harassed and began to take pictures of them with his cell phone when shots rang out,” Grant said.

Some 150 people turned out for a November 30 hearing before the Chicago city council to demand justice for Wilson. Corinthia Frederick, Wilson’s former partner and mother of his son, pointed out that the Cook County medical examiner’s office found he had been shot 18 times, at least three times in the back. “Police say they are given a reasonable doubt to shoot. How can you justify 18 shots?” she asked.

Most police department officials demonstratively walked out of the hearing when their testimony ended and statements by representatives of the families began. Roshean Williams, Wilson’s goddaughter, said, “They walked out after all the rhetoric, when it was our turn. I felt absolutely terrible, that’s why I stood up and asked ‘Where are you going?’”

Also attending the hearing were relatives of Steve Womack, killed March 25; Hubert Burgs, killed June 29; Lester Spruill, who died in police custody after his arrest July 19; and Aaron Harrison, killed August 6.

## ‘Indict and lock up the cops’

Ashunda Harris, the aunt of Aaron Harrison, testified that “the Chicago police have declared that African American life, and Hispanic life, have no value, that it is justified to shoot when somebody’s back is turned.”

Annie Johnson, Harrison’s mother, also testified. “We demand the cops be indicted and locked up,” she said. On December 8, nearly 70 people held a protest march to the site where 18-year-old Harrison was killed.

Also testifying was Janice Womack, demanding the truth be told about her son Steve’s death in a car crash. Police pushed the car he was riding in into a brick wall. Janice Womack and Carol Montgomery, Womack’s grandmother, have organized protests as well as joining in actions called by families of other victims of cop violence.

At least 32 people were shot by cops here in 2007 according to the interim superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, Dana Starks. Asked at the hearing if the 32 shot included people hit with Taser guns, police officials answered no.

At least two people in Chicago in the last two years—Geoffrey Johnson, 42, and Ronald Hasse, 54—died after being shocked with a Taser gun. Hasse’s case marks the first time that a medical examiner has listed a jolt from the electroshock weapon as the primary cause of death. The police commonly blame deaths from Tasing to be drugs in the victim’s system.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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In recent weeks the city of Chicago has taken steps to quiet down protests against police abuse. Mayor Richard Daley announced November 29 the appointment of a new police superintendent, former FBI official J.P. Weis.

The city government also recently announced a \$19.8 million settlement to be awarded to four former death row inmates pardoned in 2003 by former governor George Ryan.

The four are among scores of people, most of them African American, who were tortured into confessing to crimes between 1971 and 1992, under the direction of former police lieutenant Jon Burge. A special prosecutor’s report published in 2006 revealed that Burge and those under his command beat suspects, shocked their genitals with electricity, put plastic bags over their heads, stuck guns in their mouths, and inflicted radiator burns on them.

The *Chicago Tribune* ran a series on police abuse in December entitled “Shielded from the Truth.” The series reported that on average Chicago police shoot a civilian once every 10 days. More than 100 people have been killed in the last decade; 250 others have been injured. But only a tiny fraction of the shootings—less than 1 percent—have been ruled unjustified.

# Capitalist rivalries mark climate conference

## Continued from front page

added costs of adopting emissions reduction standards would hobble U.S. companies. Bush also criticized the pact for setting reductions only for the advanced capitalist countries. He singled out China and India as nations that should face controls.

## Carbon trading: lucrative market

The EU powers, with lower per capita emissions than the United States, accepted the Kyoto Protocol. They also developed a greenhouse gas emissions trading exchange. Carbon trading in 2008 is expected to be \$70 billion, more than double the trade in 2006.

Kyoto adherents at the Bali conference, “particularly European countries, were eager to start the process of setting new limits to sustain the market in emissions credits—a keystone of the protocol,” the *New York Times* pointed out December 16.

EU delegates condemned Washington for not signing on to Kyoto and branded their U.S. rival as the main source of the world’s environmental problems.

In his speech in Bali, former U.S. vice president Albert Gore scored points against the Bush White House, declaring, “My own country, the United States, is principally responsible for obstructing progress here.” He suggested a new Democratic administration would back emissions caps. Gore’s position has won support from General Electric, Chevron, and other U.S. companies seeking to cash in on “a potential \$300 billion U.S. market for such pollution permits,” Bloomberg News noted December 3.

A frenzied tone was adopted by many speakers at the Bali meeting. “The situation is so desperately serious that any delay could push us past the tipping point, beyond which the ecological, financial, and human costs would increase dramatically,” stated

## Bolivia: opposing marches around constitution



Associated Press

Tens of thousands of workers and peasants demonstrated December 15 in La Paz, Bolivia’s capital, in support of a new constitution proposed by President Evo Morales. A similar number mobilized that day in the four wealthiest provinces—Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, and Pando—to oppose the constitution and call for their region’s “autonomy.” Capitalist spokespeople in those provinces are calling for a referendum to establish regional decision-making power over natural gas royalties, land policy, and the police. The energy industries were nationalized in 2006. Capitalists and landlords also oppose the constitution’s granting of autonomous rights to Bolivia’s indigenous majority. The four provinces are more white and mestizo than other regions. Morales placed the military on alert before the demonstrations.

—CINDY JAQUITH

UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon. Gore claimed the entire north polar ice cap “could completely disappear in as little as five to seven years.”

Kevin Watkins, director of the UN Human Development Report Office, expressed the view that the semicolonial world is the biggest threat to the environment, because of its size and its need to develop industrially. He wrote in the December 14 *Guardian*, “About 70% of the carbon surge over the next 25 years will originate in developing countries—most of it in India and China. From a climate change perspective, Asia has three critical ingredients that add up to crisis: high growth, large populations, and an energy system fuelled by large reserves of coal.”

Some delegates from semicolonial countries were suspicious of an offer by imperialist governments to establish a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (REDD) plan. The REDD would reward governments with carbon credits if they introduce programs to combat deforestation.

“There is concern about the developed world stealing our forests,” Fiu Elisana Mata’ese, head of the Samoan group O’le Siosiomaga Society, told the Reuters news agency. “This is an attempt to globally own the resources that are ours. We are concerned indigenous people who have managed forests for generations will not have a say in how they are run.”

## Professed concern for poor nations

Appealing for support in their fight against the U.S. government, EU delegates professed concern about the differential effects of climate change on the most underdeveloped nations. An “Adaptation Fund” was proposed to aid countries stricken by drought or flooding attributed to global warming. It consisted of a mere \$36 million.

Washington campaigned hard at the conference for emissions reductions

goals to be set for China and India, but was unsuccessful by the end of the conference.

A resolution backed by delegates from the EU and many semicolonial countries initially called on the most industrialized countries to reduce emissions by 25 to 40 percent by the year 2020. Washington, along with Ottawa and Tokyo, stood firm in rejecting any concrete goal. The final resolution omitted mention of specific goals, stating instead that “deep cuts in global emissions will be required.” The resolution is not binding on any government.

The government of Australia, which under the Liberal administration had opposed Kyoto, ratified it after the election of Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd. The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that “by not ratifying Kyoto, Australia was estimated to be missing out on \$3.8 billion of economic activity a year” such as futures trading in carbon credits.

Wall Street announced December 12 that it, too, is getting in on the profits to be made in the antiglobal warming business. Nymex Holdings and a group of Wall Street trading houses plan to start up the Green Exchange, which will offer environmental futures, options, and swaps contracts.

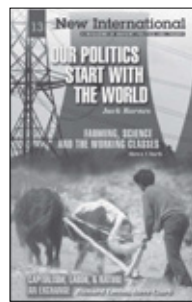
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# Rightist Ron Paul draws support in '08 campaign

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Ronald Paul, a previously little-known Republican congressman from Texas, has been drawing attention in the presidential race. CNN and the *New York Times* polls show Paul fourth behind Republican candidates Rudolph Giuliani, Mitt Romney, and John McCain in New Hampshire, the first primary contest. In national polls Paul registers about 4 percent. He recently collected \$6 million in a 24-hour fund-raising drive from wealthy contributors.

Paul campaigners have showed up at demonstrations against the war in Iraq with signs saying “Join the Ron Paul Revolution.” Support groups for Paul have sprung up on a number of college campuses.

Paul opposes the war in Iraq from a rightist, nationalist standpoint, arguing that it is not in “America’s interests.”

He rails against “big” government, its intrusions on individual liberties, and the corruption of Washington “insiders.” He says he would abolish the Department of Education, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Reserve,

and the CIA. Paul has called for repeal of most federal drug laws, and is against the death penalty.

The congressman calls for lifting the economic embargo against Cuba as the only effective way to deal with what he calls the “communist dictatorship” on the island.

During a May 15 Republican debate, Paul drew sharp criticism from the other candidates when he said that the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were the result of the U.S. presence in the Middle East. “They attack us because we’ve been over there; we’ve been bombing Iraq for 10 years,” Paul said.

A recent meeting of his Pasadena campaigners was held in La Cañada Flintridge at the home of William Johnson, an international corporate lawyer. Average annual income in this small California city is \$125,000. Steven Vincent, a yoga instructor, announced plans at the meeting to reenact the 1773 Boston Tea Party on the Santa Monica pier. Participants would carry mock tea crates labeled “welfare state,” “IRS,” and so forth.



December 16 “Tea Party” marchers in Austin, Texas, support rightist Ron Paul’s bid for 2008 Republican Party presidential nomination. His nationalist, anti-elite demagoguery has attracted wealthy professionals, conspiracy proponents, and some antiwar youth to his campaign.

Fitness trainer and singer Juliet Annerino is planning a “Rock for Ron Paul” concert in January.

On December 16 hundreds of Paul supporters rallied in Boston to celebrate the 234th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party and its anticolonial protest against “taxation without representation.” It coincided with an online national fund-raising effort that brought in \$6 million in one day,

mostly from wealthy, middle-class professionals.

Paul campaigns against affirmative action and women’s right to abortion. He is for doing “whatever it takes” to control the border and opposes amnesty for undocumented immigrants, whom he scapegoats as a drain on social services.

Paul has also attracted a wide range of conspiracy proponents. The December 1 *Los Angeles Times* interviewed supporters who “described Paul as the antidote to alleged conspiracies that ranged from the aerial spraying of toxic ‘chemtrails’ to the coverup of the true source of the Sept. 11 implosions to a plan to force the United States into a single world government.”

Paul says the United States should quit the United Nations, NATO, and the World Trade Organization.

## EU powers push to keep top Africa trade role

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Capitalist powers in Europe used a December 8–9 African Union–European Union summit to pursue trade pacts aimed at protecting their economic dominance over Africa. In the end, many African powers refused to accept the terms.

The meeting of heads of state of the 53-member African Union and the 27-nation European Union was promoted by EU leaders as a way to foster a new era of close relations between Europe and Africa. The summit was held in Lisbon, Portugal. Portugal, which holds a six-month presidency of the EU, was the first European power to colonize Africa and the last to leave. A previous Africa-EU summit, also hosted by Portugal, took place seven years ago.

The African continent holds a wealth of natural resources, including petroleum, gold, and diamonds. But the economic development of the African nations has been greatly distorted by the exploitative economic relations imposed by imperialist countries. For example, while the gross domestic product (GDP) per person in the United States is \$43,800 and in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom is more than \$31,000, the per capita GDP in Africa ranges from \$600 in Malawi and Somalia to \$13,300 in South Africa.

The EU holds first place among African countries’ trading partners. It carried out trade with Africa worth \$315 billion in 2006.

At the same time, the rise in trade and aid packages negotiated with African countries by both China and the United States in recent years poses a threat to capitalists in the countries that are members of the EU. In 2006 Beijing held a summit for African leaders. Trade between China and Africa, now accounting for 10 percent of the latter’s total trade, has risen tenfold in the past decade. U.S. trade with African nations has also been rising.

For three decades the EU has held

a “preferential trade agreement” with African countries. The arrangement, while allowing African countries some tariffs to protect domestic agriculture and industry, perpetuated their unequal relationship with imperialism and maintained the European powers’ trade dominance in Africa.

The World Trade Organization had ruled that the agreement was unfair to Europe’s competitors and violated international trade rules. It will expire at the end of the year.

In response, EU leaders have proposed “Economic Partnership Agreements” (EPAs), which they are negotiating with individual countries or groups of countries.

While about a dozen African governments have signed such deals, most have not including Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria, and Zambia.

“It’s clear that Africa rejects the EPAs,” said Senegal president Abdoulaye Wade. “We are not talking any more about EPAs, we’ve rejected them . . . we’re going to meet to see what we can put in place of the EPAs,” he said.

African Union Commission president Alpha Oumar Konare criticized the African leaders who have signed the interim deals. “Our dearest hope is that the interim accords don’t tie down the rest [of the countries] and complicate things afterwards,” Konare said.

The summit ended in discord with the refusal of most African leaders to accept EU trade proposals and the failure of British prime minister Gordon Brown to exclude Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe. Since 2002, London, Washington, and other imperialist powers have used economic and travel sanctions to press for a government in Zimbabwe more compliant to their interests.

In the weeks leading up to the summit, Brown led a pressure campaign on African leaders to prevent Mugabe from attending the summit. Brown vowed to boycott the gathering if Mugabe attended.

The presidents of South Africa and Zambia opposed the demand to exclude Mugabe, and announced they would not attend the summit if he was not permitted to attend. Germany and Portugal opposed Brown’s call for a boycott.

In the end Mugabe attended and Brown stayed away.

## Mistrial for 6, acquittal for 1 in ‘Liberty City 7’ frame-up

BY ELLEN BRICKLEY

MIAMI—A federal trial here against 7 Black construction workers framed up on terrorism “conspiracy” charges ended December 13 in a mistrial for six and acquittal for one.

The men, known as the Liberty City Seven, were arrested in June 2006 in Miami’s main Black community. They were accused of providing material support to al-Qaeda in a plot to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago, an FBI office in Miami, and other federal buildings. Each was charged with four counts of “conspiracy to commit terrorism.” They could have been sentenced to as long as 70 years in prison.

The FBI bragged at the time of the original indictment that this was “yet another important victory in the war on terrorism.” The government’s case was built on the testimony of paid FBI informers. No weapons or bomb-making materials were found in searches following the arrests.

The seven have been held in federal detention since their arrest and remain jailed awaiting a new trial, which will begin January 7.

The government based its case on the work of two informers, Elie Assad and Abbas al Saidi, who posed as members of al-Qaeda. Assad succeeded in persuading the seven defendants to take a loyalty oath to al-Qaeda, which was videotaped and used by the government in the trial. He was paid \$80,000 by the FBI.

Al Saidi promised to furnish the men with money and supplies for the alleged plot. During the nine-month operation the informers received more than \$130,000 plus hotel lodging and expenses, according to defense attorney Ana Jhones. The defendants each received a pair of boots.

The accused ringleader of the seven, Narseal Batiste, testified during eight days on the stand that he was just trying to get money from the informers to start a construction business.

At the end of the two-month trial, U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard instructed the jury to follow federal anti-terrorism laws even if they disagreed with them.

During nine days of deliberations the jury, which included Blacks, Latinos, and whites, sent two notes to the judge indicating that the members could not reach a verdict. They were told to keep trying.

The mistrial was declared after a third note was sent to the judge saying, “We believe no further progress can be made.”

The defendant who was found not guilty, Lyglenson Lemorin, remains in detention under Department of Homeland Security orders. He is a Haitian immigrant and legal U.S. resident for 20 years. Lemorin could be tried in immigration court, where standards of proof are lower than criminal court, on the same conspiracy charges of which he was just acquitted.



## ON THE PICKET LINE

### General strike in Greece protests gov't austerity plans

ATHENS, Greece—About 80,000 striking workers marched here under their union banners December 12 as part of a nationwide general strike to protest attacks on social security.

The strike was called by the two labor union federations in the private and public sectors respectively. Some 30,000 workers participated in a rally and march in Thessaloniki. Similar protests took place in most other cities around the country.

The workers were protesting a package of measures proposed by the conservative capitalist government of the New Democracy Party. The legislation would cut social security benefits and raise the retirement age, which is currently 65 years for men and 60 years for women. It would also reduce the number of jobs registered as “hazardous” from 700,000 to 350,000. Workers in this category, such as airport workers, are eligible to retire earlier than 65.

The government proposals would also make it harder for industrial workers injured on the job to be eligible for compensation and early retirement. For example, a construction worker who loses an arm would not be eligible for workers’ compensation. Instead the worker would have to get a job that doesn’t require two arms.

The labor rally and march demanded the reduction of the retirement age limit, the extension of the “hazard-

ous” category to more jobs, increases in retirement benefits, and no cuts in social security.

Some of the largest contingents at the march were of airport workers, especially from Olympic Airways. The government intends to privatize the airline and lay many workers off. Nonunion workers also took part in the rally, including a contingent of DHL couriers who are fighting for a union.

—Bobbis Misailides

### Access-A-Ride workers in N.Y. strike for wages, benefits

NEW YORK—Some 1,500 paratransit drivers and mechanics, members of Local 1181-1061 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), began a strike here December 10 to win higher wages, better health benefits, and an improved 401(k) plan. The union also wants a three-year instead of a five-year contract. Union members rejected a contract offer a few months ago.

The drivers on strike serve about half of the users of the Access-A-Ride system, transporting up to 9,000 elderly and disabled persons per day in special vans. Four companies are being struck: Atlantic Paratrans, Maggie’s Paratransit, MV Transportation, and Transit Facility Management.

“Our strike is solid,” said Daniel Rivera at an Atlantic Paratrans picket line six days into the strike. “Only two people out of some 350 have crossed,” he added proudly.

the police often take hours to respond or never respond, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported.

There are an estimated 10,000 members of the Sikh religion in the Seattle area.

## Seattle vigil protests racist attack on Sikh cab driver

BY CECELIA MORIARITY

SEATTLE—More than 300 members of the Sikh community in this area held a vigil November 28 in nearby Renton in support of Sukhvir Singh, a taxicab driver who was brutally beaten November 24 by a drunken football fan. Singh, 48, is an Indian-born Sikh.

Seattle cops put the attacker, Luis Vazquez, 20, into Singh’s cab after Vazquez had been ejected from Husky Stadium at the University of Washington during the Apple Cup game.

During the trip, Vazquez subjected Singh to obscenities and racist slurs, calling him “an Iraqi terrorist,” according to press reports. Singh had his turban torn off, hair ripped out, and was bitten and beaten by his attacker, until Singh was able to pull to the side of Interstate 5 to get out of his cab. A Metro bus driver who saw what was happening pulled over to block traffic to protect Singh; bus passengers made calls to 911.

Singh was hospitalized for kidney and respiratory damage caused by the attack.

Vazquez was charged with third-degree assault and malicious harassment, the state’s hate crime charge. Singh’s attorney, Hardeep Singh Rekhi, who is a volunteer with the Sikh Coalition, told the press that his organization, which opposes anti-Sikh chauvinism, is demanding that the attacker be prosecuted.

Other local Sikh cab drivers at the vigil reported similar incidents and say the true number is not known because



Militant/Natasha Terlexis

Contingent of Olympic Airways workers marches December 12 in Athens during one-day general strike to protest government attacks on social security. The banner opposes the threatened shutdown of the airline.

Rivera and other strikers answered big-business media attempts to blame strikers for the difficulties faced by people who rely on Access-A-Ride to get around the city. “We were going to hand out fliers letting patrons know there was a set date for the strike so they could prepare and make other arrangements. Management didn’t allow us,” Rivera said.

—Dan Fein

### N.Y. building workers rally, authorize strike

NEW YORK—Several thousand commercial cleaners, doormen, and elevator operators marched here from Times Square to Rockefeller Center December 12. The workers, members of Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), voted at the rally to authorize a strike if necessary to secure a wage increase.

The contract, covering 26,000 service workers in more than 2,000 commercial properties in the city, expires Dec. 31, 2007.

The union opened contract negotiations with the Realty Advisory

Board, an association of commercial building owners, managers, and cleaning contractors, at the end of October. A central demand of the union is a wage increase.

Since the last contract was negotiated three years ago, commercial real estate profits have skyrocketed. The union cites figures of an industry source, CoStar Group, Inc., that show rents have increased 26 percent in class A buildings in the last year as vacancy rates have dropped to 5.3 percent, a six-year low for the industry. At the same time, the union points out that real wages of workers after inflation have dropped by 5 percent since 2005.

“We’re here to get better wages because everything is going up—gas prices, rents, and the subways,” Victor Leon told the *Militant*. David Finney, a building porter for 24 years, said, “I support the fight for a contract that can insure our health care and get us a fair raise. Union members who’ve been on the job as long as I have know the health-care issue is a big one.”

—Olga Rodríguez

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



### December 31, 1982

DENVER—A serious attack on the union movement, women workers, and democratic rights is taking place in Denver, Colorado.

The attack consists of a campaign of spying, harassment, and intimidation aimed at Sally Goodman, an electrician at the Martin Marietta Corp. plant here, and other members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 766. Goodman is one of only three women electricians in the plant and is a founding member of the Denver chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. She is also a supporter of the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party.

The harassment of Goodman takes form of an “investigation” by the Defense Investigative Service (DIS), the spy agency of the Department of Defense. This harassment is taking place with the connivance and encouragement of Martin Marietta, a major weapons producer with billion-dollar contracts for making the MX missile and other military hardware.



### December 30, 1957

While “goofnik” didn’t rise more than four feet off its pad down at Cape Canaveral, Florida, two things did rise throughout the country—namely, unemployment and the cost of living.

New reports coming in this week tell of increased layoffs by leading American industries. Chrysler and Ford head the parade with announcements that they are closing down their Detroit assembly lines for a “temporary layoff” of two weeks. This lets out 90,000 workers there. Three steel plants in the Baltimore area are adding 1,400 more workers to those already laid off, and some towns in the New England textile centers report more unemployed than employed. These are layoffs publicized in the national press; others are only known in the localities where they occur.

The business economists are revising their estimate of unemployment for 1958 from the “optimistic” figure of 3 1/2 million they projected in October to a figure of five million or more.



### December 31, 1932

The shots fired by a member of the Waiters’ Union, Local 1 of New York, which sent to the hospital two of its business agents, brings sensationally to the forefront one of these running sores which has made the American labor movement unique in the entire world. The publicity attendant upon the shooting brought to public view the following facts:

It has been the custom in this union for the business agents to charge workers anywhere from \$100 up to be “placed” on a job, in agreement with the petty bosses who received from the labor racketeers a portion of the tax imposed illicitly upon the worker desperate for a job. A short time after the worker had parted with his money, and obtained the job, he found himself discharged by the boss, in cahoots with the labor officials, who promptly proceeded to start the game all over again with some other worker. While the jobs were “rotated” in this ingenious manner, the workers were being separated from vast sums of money.



# Luis Miranda, five decades of organizing support for Cuban Revolution in U.S.

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ  
AND MARTÍN KOPPEL

NEW YORK—Luis Miranda, an organizer for the defense of the Cuban Revolution for five decades in the United States, died here November 13 at the age of 79. Speaking at Miranda's burial in his native Cuba, Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, praised Miranda as an "unequalled example of the dignity, strength, vigor, and patriotism" of Cuban revolutionaries.

Born in Havana in 1928, Miranda came to the United States at the age of 20. He was one of the thousands of Cubans who emigrated to this country to escape the harsh economic realities imposed by U.S. imperialist domination of the island.

In 1949 Miranda met Walfrido Moreno, who was active in the New York chapter of Cuba's Orthodox Party (*Ortodoxos*), which campaigned on a platform of opposition to Yankee domination and rampant corruption. Moreno's barbershop became an organizing center for opponents of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who came to power in a 1952 coup.

In 1955 Fidel Castro visited New York and other U.S. cities to found chapters of the newly organized July 26 Movement. Luis Miranda attended that meeting and became a founding member. He and his comrades raised funds for the Cuban revolutionary war led by the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement. They organized efforts to collect and transport material aid to the combatants in the Sierra Maestra mountains, sometimes having to elude the U.S. authorities.

Miranda and other July 26 militants founded Casa Cuba in 1957 to win support for the revolutionary struggle in Cuba. They often worked jointly with pro-independence Puerto Ricans of the Nationalist Party. After the 1959 revolutionary victory, many Cubans living the United States returned to their homeland. Casa Cuba organized support for the revolution among the Cubans who remained in this country.

## Bay of Pigs, 'missile crisis'

The members of Casa Cuba were in their majority factory and restaurant workers, Miranda told *Militant* reporters Martín Koppel and Olga Rodríguez in an unpublished 2002 interview. They were disciplined and unswervingly loyal to their revolution and its leadership. They held weekly meetings to discuss and educate about the gains of the revolution and defend it against attack. They stood up fearlessly to harassment and assaults by local and federal cops and by right-wing Cuban thugs.

On April 17, 1961, a U.S.-organized mercenary force landed on Cuban shores at the Bay of Pigs. In less than 72 hours, Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, Revolutionary National Police, and popular militias of workers and peasants defeated and captured the invaders—U.S. imperi-

alism's first military defeat in Latin America.

As the invasion unfolded, Casa Cuba held a three-day, 24-hour picket outside the United Nations together with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and other groups, Miranda told the *Militant*. On April 20 they organized a rally of 5,000 at Union Square demanding "U.S. hands off Cuba!" The Fair Play for Cuba Committee held simultaneous protests in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Boston, and other cities.

At the United Nations, Cuban foreign minister Raúl Roa "took the floor to demand protection for the Cubans demonstrating in support of Cuba who were under attack by the *gusanos* [Cuban American rightists] and the police. A number of us were injured or jailed," Miranda said.

In October 1962 the Kennedy administration brought the world to the brink of nuclear war during the so-called Cuban missile crisis. As Washington prepared for an invasion of the island, millions of Cubans mobilized to defend their socialist revolution.

"We were in a constant, non-stop, open meeting during those days," discussing how to respond to the U.S. threats, Miranda told the *Militant*. "We received lots of calls from people who, in a state of panic, asked us why Cuba wanted to drop atomic bombs on the United States! At first we thought this was some joke, but after the Cuban Mission at the UN told us they had received hundreds of calls, it became clear that panic and lies were being whipped up by the U.S. government and press."

In face of the mobilizations and readiness of Cuban workers and farmers to defend the revolution, Washington had to back away from its invasion plans. "I believe it was the clear and sovereign attitude of the Cuban people that saved the world from disaster," Miranda said.

## 'We won the streets'

At that time, "the streets were domi-



Right, photo by Roberto Mercado  
Luis Miranda, left front, in 1959 picket at United Nations building in New York to demand Cuban ex-dictator Fulgencio Batista not be allowed to enter the United States after victory of the Cuban Revolution. Right, Miranda joins protest in June 2006 at U.S. federal building in Manhattan to demand freedom for Puerto Rican political prisoner Antonio Camacho.

nated by the right-wing exiles, and if you decided to demonstrate on the streets, you knew you would have to fight them." Casa did organize public demonstrations and meetings against the U.S. war threats, joining with other forces. They held their own and defended themselves, despite advice from liberal "friends" to keep a lower profile.

"It was inspiring to see the women on those picket lines, in the battles with the *gusanos* and the police. They came with their sticks. They put themselves at the front of the marches. If the cops grabbed someone, they were the first to scream and fight with the cops to prevent them from taking one of us away," Miranda recalled.

"That is when we won the streets," he said. Casa Cuba won the right to publicly demonstrate and organize in New York in defense of revolutionary Cuba, and continued to defend the space they had won.

Casa campaigned against frame-ups of its members. During Castro's September 1960 visit to New York to speak at the UN General Assembly, Cuban counterrevolutionaries assaulted pro-revolution patrons of El Prado Restaurant in Manhattan, whose owners were sending food to the Cuban delegation at the Hotel Theresa. In the ensuing fight, a Ven-

ezuelan girl was accidentally killed. The cops framed up a 28-year-old Cuban worker, Francisco Molina, a supporter of the revolution. Molina was convicted and jailed, though later he returned to Cuba, freed through a U.S.-Cuban prisoner exchange.

When Fidel Castro stayed at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem, Luis Miranda was part of the security team for the Cuban delegation. He was among those who accompanied Malcolm X to the hotel's 10th floor to meet with Castro, he later recounted.

Casa and its members had to defend themselves constantly from harassment by the FBI, immigration, and local cops because of their actions in support of revolutionary Cuba. In 1963, Miranda said, the U.S. government demanded that the entire Casa leadership register as "agents of a foreign power." "We had to fight the case for three months" and finally defeated the charges, he said.

In the 1970s and early 1980s Casa was the target of rightist bomb attacks, including fire bombings of their headquarters. In those years, supporters of the Cuban Revolution in New York and other cities were assaulted and murdered as paramilitary groups like the White Rose and Alpha 66 acted

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## Cuban wins custody of daughter in Miami

BY BERNIE SENTER

MIAMI—Rafael Izquierdo, a farmer from Cuba, has been granted sole custody of his five-year-old daughter. A negotiated settlement ended a two-year attempt by Florida authorities to give the child to foster parents in Miami who are well-known opponents of the Cuban Revolution.

The December 4 agreement also stipulates that Izquierdo may not return with his daughter to Cuba until May 2010. The foster family was granted 52 days of visitation rights a year.

The U.S. government's hostility toward the Cuban Revolution marked the case from the outset. During the custody trial this fall, Judge Jeri Cohen declared, "The United States is reluctant to repatriate a child to a communist country."

The child's mother came to Miami

in March 2005 with her two children after winning a visa lottery. Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) took custody of the children in December of that year after the mother attempted suicide.

After notifying Izquierdo in Cuba that his daughter was in state care, DCF placed the children in foster care in the home of Joe and Maria Cubas in 2006. Sports agent Joe Cubas is known for attempts to recruit Cuban baseball players to defect to the United States.

Izquierdo applied for a visa to travel to Miami in July 2006 to gain custody of his daughter. The U.S. State Department resisted granting the visa until May 2007.

DCF charged that Izquierdo was unfit to raise his daughter. It argued that the father was guilty of neglect and abandonment for allowing the

child to migrate to the United States with a mentally unstable mother, and it claimed he refused to take an interest in his daughter's welfare once she was in Miami.

After dragged-out proceedings, in September the judge ruled that Izquierdo was fit to raise his child. But then she opened a second trial on whether the girl would be emotionally "endangered" by returning to Cuba with her father. Izquierdo agreed to the compromise settlement after the appellate court refused to hear whether the second trial was necessary.

Asked how he felt about having to stay in the United States 30 months before returning to Cuba with his daughter, Izquierdo said, "There's many things that you have to suffer through in order to achieve what you want, but life is that way."



# Cuba and the African struggle against imperialism

## African studies journal reviews two Pathfinder books by Cuban combatants

The following article, titled “Cuba and the recentering of African history,” appeared in the September 2007 issue of *African Studies Review*, the principal academic journal published by the African Studies Association. It is a review of the books *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*, an interview with Victor Dreke, and *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, a book of interviews with Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong. Both are published by Pathfinder Press.

Jacques Depelchin, recently a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, is described in the review as a member of the Ota Benga Alliance for Peace, Healing and Dignity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



BY JACQUES DEPELCHIN

These books are the kinds of books historians are always hoping for, but that very rarely see the light of day. Their value for average readers and for scholars cannot be overstressed, for several reasons, the most important being the historical process of reconnecting Cuba and Africa at a time when such reconnecting continues to be fiercely discouraged by the powers-that-be. It is plausible that potential readers might dismiss the books as mere Cuban propaganda; such readers might even, to their own detriment, find in the books confirmation of their own ideological blinders. However, anyone making a sober assessment of what Cuba has had to go through since the overthrow of Batista (1959) would find it difficult not to be impressed not just by Cuba’s survival, but by its having thrived following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989). The relentless destabilization schemes from various U.S. administrations seems to have had the exact opposite effect on the Cuban political leadership: it never stopped learning from its successes and its failures, from its enemies and its alleged allies. In retrospect, Cuba’s survival can be seen as one of the greatest feats of the generic resisters to capitalism since the overthrow of slavery in Haiti 1804. As in Haiti, the costs of contesting the written and unwritten rules of capitalism have been extremely high, inside and outside of Cuba. One has to remember the pressures on Nelson Mandela *not* to visit Cuba after he was released from jail to understand the extent to which the United States in particular (and any willing associate) will go to prevent the reconstruction of African societies on the basis of self-reliance and solidarity.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of the Cold War, it would be too easy to dismiss these witnesses as ideological proxies eager to say what the Cuban leaders want to hear. Others will not like the advocacy approach of Mary-Alice Waters—the introducer, interviewer, editor, and president of Pathfinder Press, publisher of these texts—while minimizing the fact that such questioning is rarely raised when the opposite line, nay, the demonization of anything Cuban, is pushed.

Victor Dreke, the author/interviewee of *From the Escambray to the Congo*, was the number-two person in the Cuban group sent to the Congo in 1965 to fight on the side of the rebels in Eastern

Congo (the group then led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila). The episode is well known and extensively documented, but with Dreke’s story we are finally offered a first-hand account by Che’s most trusted aide during their seven months in the Congo between April and November 1965. In addition to the details of Dreke’s role in assembling the right kind of persons for a mission then understood to be the most important Cuban mission since 1959, the reader gets a clear glimpse of some of the principles that allowed Cuba to do so much in the face of such constant threats to its own survival.

Dreke’s admiration for the Cuban leadership is evident, and reminiscent of Che’s own sentiments expressed in his farewell letter to Fidel just before leaving for the Congo. At times Dreke is aware that readers will not believe him—as when he lists the shortcomings that afflicted the mission on its way to the Congo and during its mission. For a mission considered a high priority by both Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, it is astounding, even from hindsight, to find out that it was based on almost nonexistent intelligence and very little advanced preparation: in retrospect, Che’s vision of what was to be accomplished was based largely on wishful thinking (namely, Che’s *foco* theory of voluntarism: start something and, by osmosis, a revolution will follow).

These men entered a situation that was far from ideal for the Cubans’ objectives of confronting their enemy in as many places as possible so that the pressure on Cuba itself would be lessened. Instead, they came to find out that the leaders (in particular Kabila and Soumialot) had described a situation that was not reflected in the reality they found on the ground. At the beginning Che was convinced that with time and hard work the discrepancy between expectations and reality could be reduced. But it only got worse; indeed, given how bad it got, one wonders how the whole operation did not end more disastrously than it did. Yet to the very end Che tried not to retreat, an outcome Fidel guessed at by dispatching emissaries to convince Che, as diplomatically as possible, to leave the Congo. Fortunately for them, Che finally resigned himself to the only possible avenue: retreat with honor, with their weapons. Indeed, Che himself prefaced his highly critical assessment by saying he was reporting on a disaster, but he added that he hoped that it would help avoid future disasters. How much the average Cubans and the leadership learned from the Congo’s disastrous mission can be guessed from what they accomplished on so many other fronts in Africa (especially in Angola), as so eloquently stressed by Armando Enríquez, the dean of Asian and African studies in Cuba, in his foreword to the volume



Cuban volunteer combatants in Congo, 1965. On right is Ernesto Che Guevara. The books *From the Escambray to the Congo* and *Our History Is Still Being Written* both describe decisive role of Cuba’s internationalist solidarity in African struggles against colonialism and imperialist domination, from the Congo to Guinea Bissau to Angola.

focused on Victor Dreke.

Dreke’s account starts from his experience prior to the overthrow of Batista. “From Escambray to the Congo” provides internal details often ignored in analyses of the durability and depth of the Cuban victory over the U.S. military, financial, and political arsenal directed against Cuba. The key of Cuban successes from the Escambray to the Congo and beyond could be summarized as unity, discipline, and self-reliance: “patria o muerte: venceremos.” In the global North it continues to be an article of faith that the only way out of underdevelopment is the Western Way. The idea that underdeveloped people could be successful in a different way was considered impossible; yet Cubans have demonstrated the fallacy of such an affirmation.

From 1959 through the Sierra Maestra campaign—mopping up operations in the Escambray against the bandits being supported by the United States, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Missile Crisis in October 1962—Che, Fidel, and their comrades managed to do something comparable to what the slaves did in Haiti between 1791 and 1804, with one big difference: so far, the winners of the battle against Batista and his allies have managed to preserve what they won, whereas the descendants of the former slaves are still battling the descendants

of the enslavers to make Haiti what it was supposed to be rather than the so-called poorest country of the Western Hemisphere. What happened in Escambray proved to be one of the best training grounds of the Cuban Revolution. It is in Escambray that people like Dreke were tempered for the kinds of missions they performed in Africa. It was in Escambray, as Armando Enríquez eloquently writes in the foreword, that the Cubans saw themselves engaged in a long and bloody class warfare: the battle lines between revolution and counterrevolution were fought over daily; in these contexts, unity, discipline, creativity were not mere theoretical concepts. Enríquez’s foreword aptly synthesizes Dreke’s account: as a counter to the divisions imposed by the dominant system, unity could be singled out as the essential contribution of the Cubans to the emancipation of Africa and the diaspora.

With regard to the Congolese rebels’ leadership, the assessment is mixed. There is obvious reluctance to stress the negative aspects, as can be seen in almost all accounts of the episode (in particular, Gleijeses 2002). Instead, Dreke prefers to focus on the unity within Cuba between its people and the leadership, without which Cuba would not have been able to survive not only the onslaught of the U.S. destabilizing cam-

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## Cuba and Africa

### *From the Escambray to the Congo* In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution

by Victor Dreke

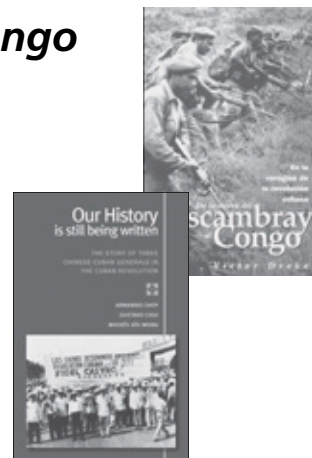
Dreke, second in command of the internationalist column in the Congo led by Che Guevara in 1965, recounts the determination, internationalism, and creative joy with which working people have defended their revolutionary course against U.S. imperialism—from Cuba’s Escambray mountains to Africa and beyond. **\$17.00**

### *Our History Is Still Being Written*

The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution

by Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong

Three young rebels of Chinese-Cuban ancestry became combatants in the 1956–58 revolutionary war that brought down a U.S.-backed dictatorship and opened the door to the socialist revolution in the Americas. Each became a general in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces. All three were among the more than 300,000 Cuban volunteer combatants who helped Angola defeat invasions by the apartheid regime in South Africa. **\$20.00**





# Cuba and African struggles

Continued from page 7

paigns, but also—and this cannot be overstressed—the lack of reliability of the Soviet Union. It was that combination of a lethal enemy and an ally reluctant to treat its ally as an equal that led the Cuban leadership to stress self-reliance above all, especially with regard to the relationship with other liberation movements in Africa.

Whereas almost from the moment Che and his companions set foot on the shores of Lake Tanganyika the Congo mission was seen as a failure, the experience in the Escambray was the kind of success that explains why the Cubans felt that they could reproduce their successes anywhere in the world. It was the victory in the Escambray, against the internal opponents of the socialist transformation in Cuba, that provided the kind of self-confidence without which someone like Dreke and his companions would not have been able to think that anything they undertook was possible.

Through the words of Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, *Our History Is Still Being Written* shifts the focus to Angola (1975–91), but not exclusively, as it follows each of the contributors in their various assignments inside and outside Cuba. Though of different backgrounds (General Sío Wong was head of strategic reserves, General Choy directed the cleaning up of Havana harbor, and General Chui almost died in Angola following a severe injury), they all served in Angola. Again, it is difficult not to see the connection between the successes in Angola and the earlier (internal and external) battles that prepared the Cubans for their victory over the armed forces of apartheid. In a subdued, almost humble, way, these two books can be seen as collective praise for what Cuba has been able to do, not just for specific African countries, but for the majority of humanity resisting the unrelenting assaults of the capitalist system. In the struggle for this goal, the internal and external successes were extraordinary, given the intensity and extension of hostility coming from the United States: on his visit to Cuba in July 1991, Nelson Mandela praised and thanked the Cubans for what he described as their “unparalleled contribution to African Freedom” (the speech is excerpted in an appendix mostly devoted to the battle of Cuito Cuanavale).

Choy, Chui, and Wong are all of Chinese origin—members of a group that, like all nonwhite members of Cuban society under the Batista regime, was the target of societal, political, and financial discrimination. However, unlike Dreke’s volume, this book also covers the period coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet Union. To me, the most fascinating sections are part 2 (“Strengthening the Revolution”) and part 3 (“The Special Period and Beyond”), in which the authors show how the Cuban people (and their leaders) managed to figure a way out of the crisis. With their backs to the wall, no retreat was possible; it is a story of ingenuity and sacrifice. At least in terms of the dominant mindset, Cuba is still perceived as being on the side of the losers; but such a mindset must continue to prescribe that Cuba remain on the losing side, for fear of attracting those who are eager to put an end to the systemic and systematic injustice that goes hand in hand with the dominant system.

It is difficult to assess precisely the internal political impact of the interna-

tionalist military missions, but it would also be difficult to claim that three hundred and seventy-five thousand Cubans, from foot soldiers to generals, fighting for a cause that each of them identified with, did not have a positive impact. For example, reading about backwardness in the midst of real or potential wealth was different from the shock many got when they saw with their own eyes “a country like Angola with great natural wealth . . . yet with a population facing needs of the most basic type” (101). It is clear from these books, but also from more scholarly works like that of Glejeses mentioned above, that for the Cuban internationalists, the ideological fight was literally about *Patria o muerte*. The objectives that Chui, Choy, and Wong fought for overseas were identical to those that continue to be fought for in Cuba today.

I have never visited Cuba, but I have followed the trials and tribulations of people who were determined not to rest until they gave the best of themselves in order to eradicate as much as possible the depredations of a dehumanizing system. Ideological foes tend to downplay their achievements by citing the outside support Cuba received from the Soviet Union, or the fact that it is an island, or its repressive policies. But even with all of these elements factored in, the explanations for Cuba’s resilience still fall short. Until, of course, reference is made to individual liberties.

What is the point, however, of defending or having individual liberties if, at the same time, such liberties would lead to accepting the inequalities that make hunger and ignorance acceptable while those who have the means end up using them to entrench injustices. As long as the global situation makes it a crime to think that capitalism can only reproduce itself through genocidal sequences, Cuba’s achievements will be difficult to assess in a serene fashion; suffice it to say that in the realm of education and health, few countries can match their record, given the resources at their disposal and given the hostility from the United States.

If Cuba had collapsed like the Soviet Union (or China), would these two



Courtesy of Moisés Sío Wong

General Moisés Sío Wong, second from left, leads operation in northern Angola, 1976.

books have been written? Asking this question bears on the context in which histories tend to be produced, regardless of the focus. As many African countries approach the fiftieth anniversaries of their independence, how will decolonization be framed? It is a cliché to say that histories are written by the victors: in a continent that has often been on the losing side, should one be surprised if the assessments are presented from the angle of those eager to be on the side of the winners? More important, the question bears on issues that, because of Cold War framing, were either hidden or deliberately downplayed because opening them up would have forced a discussion of what really was at stake during the Cold War. Throughout the period, President Nyerere’s vision of an Africa rooted in solidarity (*ujamaa*) did lead to mistakes, but they were mistakes made on the basis of a conviction that the values promoted by capitalist development would continue the destruction of the continent as surely as it had been started under colonial rule.

Yet nurturing a system based on South-South solidarity relationships is slowly becoming an alternative, a viable solution to relations dictated solely by considerations determined by the rules and regulations of a predatory socioeconomic system. Whatever errors and abuses may have been committed by Cuba, there is no doubt that its survival, so far, can be attributed largely to

the fact that its leaders ensured that the gap between their own lifestyle and that of the average Cuban was kept as narrow as possible. Solidarity with those at the bottom of society is always bound to slow those who would use the ideology of freedom and the market to give themselves the right to enrich themselves at the cost of the majority and, at the same time, assuage their conscience through charity. Such a vision for which Cubans fought—in Africa—has been denied to Africans.

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## Note

1. For skeptical readers unconvinced by this reviewer’s approach, we can only suggest the following works of well-credentialed scholars: Glejeses (2002); Kalfon (1997); Anderson (1997); Taibo (1995).

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# The capitalist ravaging of nature

The recent international summit on climate change held in Bali, Indonesia, had nothing to do with cleaning up the air, waters, and soil being steadily degraded by the big corporations. It promoted self-serving myths and panic on the question of global warming, behind which rival capitalist governments jostled among each other over markets, including the lucrative new “green” market in carbon credits and futures.

For the working class, protection of the environment is not a “scientific” or “technical” question. It is a social and class question. The ravaging of the environment worldwide is caused by capitalism—a system that is based on the exploitation of labor and nature by the ruling propertied classes. It goes hand in hand with the social breakdowns, economic and financial crises, spreading wars, and growth of rightist and fascist forces that mark capitalism’s growing world disorder.

The capitalists put forward myths to disguise the source of pollution, deforestation, and other ills under capitalism. In Bali their spokespeople repeated the lie that “too much consumption” and “too much development”—especially in semicolonial nations with “too many people”—are the real threat. UN “human development” official Kevin Watkins laid it out starkly: “From a climate change perspective, Asia has three critical ingredients that add up to crisis: high growth, large populations, and an energy system fuelled by large reserves of coal.” Workers, however, should reject the imperial arrogance that dictates that toilers in the semicolonial world have no right to develop industry and increase their consumption or population.

All the capitalist rulers’ “solutions” are against the interests of workers and farmers, from demands that oppressed nations forego industrial development to forcing workers to pay “carbon taxes” on fuel. These are always couched in how “we” can save the environment. But there is no such “we”—*they* are the exploiting classes, which in their drive for profits ruin the environment, and *we*, the working people of the world, pay the deadly price for it, especially those from the most oppressed sections of the toilers.

The only approach in the interests of the vast ma-

jority of humanity—a working-class program—starts from the historically demonstrated capacity of human beings to transform nature, raise the productivity of social labor, and advance the accessibility of culture and civilization to more and more of the world’s toilers. It starts with approaching every so-called environmental question as one of how to advance the defense of the working class.

We must begin with the world. We should support efforts of nations oppressed by imperialism to acquire and develop the energy sources necessary to expand electrification, a precondition for economic and social advances. That means opposing the drive by Washington and its allies to block those nations from developing nuclear power and other energy sources required to bring much of humanity out of darkness.

We must support workers’ struggles to organize trade unions and use union power on the job, including in the fight to enforce health and safety, on and off the job. Working people must wage a struggle in the political arena—we need to break from the twin parties of the capitalist rulers, the Democrats and Republicans, and build a labor party, based on the unions, that fights for the interests of working people here and abroad.

As part of a broader working-class program, we should demand that the oil and other energy companies should be nationalized and placed under workers control, to enforce job safety, combat pollution, and provide affordable energy to working people. We should demand the government enforce controls on industry and agribusiness emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases—regardless of whether other governments are doing so. The federal government should guarantee the costs of production to working farmers and halt farm foreclosures.

These struggles point to the need to build a revolutionary movement that can take political power out of the hands of the capitalists and form a workers and farmers government, as part of the worldwide struggle for socialism. That victory will make it possible to unleash the untapped power of working people to transform the environment and society in which we live.

## Luis Miranda, Cuban revolutionary

Continued from page 6

with impunity. Cops and local authorities turned a blind eye, or arrested pro-Cuba demonstrators instead. City agencies repeatedly harassed Casa with citations for alleged fire, liquor, and other violations.

### Broad platform for solidarity

Casa Cuba also served as a center for organizing solidarity with anti-imperialist battles worldwide, especially in Latin America, and social struggles in the United States. In 1962 it changed its name to Casa de las Américas to reflect the breadth of its solidarity.

Casa de las Américas opened its doors to supporters of the Puerto Rican independence struggle, the movement against the U.S. war on Vietnam, the battle against South African apartheid, campaigns to free political prisoners in Chile and other Latin American countries, and the Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions. They sponsored meetings on Black rights struggles at home. They hosted delegations of the United Farm Workers union, on one occasion setting up 82 cots in their hall for a touring UFW delegation.

In 1987 Luis Miranda became president of Casa de

las Américas. He continued Casa’s proud tradition of solidarity and nonexclusion, opening its doors to supporters of all political tendencies that defended Cuba’s right to self-determination. He was a regular at the annual UN decolonization hearings, joining the Puerto Rican pro-independence delegation.

Luis delighted in making Casa available as an organizing center to young people who wanted to travel to Cuba to see it for themselves. He would come alive with enthusiasm when introduced to youth interested in finding out more about the revolution.

He was keenly interested in the struggles of working people in the United States. Miranda gave his support to the 2003–2006 battle by coal miners at the Co-op mine in Utah to organize into a union, and to the defense effort when the bosses sued the miners and those who told their side of the story, including the *Militant*.

Over the last decade of his life, Miranda devoted much of his time to the fight to free the five Cuban revolutionaries being held in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges. He identified with Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Ramón Labañino as lifelong fighters who consciously chose to work and fight inside the United States on behalf of their cause: defending socialist Cuba and embracing struggles for dignity and freedom worldwide.

### Corrections

The Dec. 10, 2007, issue of the *Militant* incorrectly reported the top subscription seller in our fall circulation campaign. The top seller was Seth Dellinger, who sold 52 subscriptions.

The credit for the photo of the immigrant rights protest in Pacific, Washington, that appeared on page one of the Dec. 24, 2007, issue was incorrect. Cecelia Moriarity was the photographer.

### ‘Militant’ publishing schedule

**The Militant will not publish next week. We will resume publication with the issue dated Jan. 14, 2008, which comes off the press January 3.**

## CIA torture



Guards with prisoner held as “enemy combatant” at U.S. naval base in Guantánamo, Cuba, February 2006.

### Continued from front page

mation gleaned from Abu Zubaydah stopped terror attacks and saved lives,” he told CNN.

While the Bush administration has repeatedly denied that U.S. intelligence officials use torture, it has not commented on what “interrogation” methods it considers acceptable. U.S. attorney general Michael Mukasey would not rule out waterboarding as torture during his confirmation hearings in October.

“I can say that any interrogations have been legal and they have been fully briefed to the United States Congress,” White House spokeswoman Dana Perino told the press. In 2002 the Department of Justice gave the CIA legal approval for the water torture.

According to the *Washington Post*, a bipartisan congressional group was briefed in 2002 on the CIA’s use of waterboarding and other “harsh interrogation techniques.” Between 2002 and 2003 the CIA held about 30 private briefings with members of Congress, including Democrat Nancy Pelosi, the current Speaker of the House. The briefings, attended by four to eight Democratic and Republican leaders, included descriptions of “harsh interrogation methods” they employed and virtual tours of secret CIA jails.

Porter Goss, who later became director of the CIA, was among the members of Congress briefed. “Among those being briefed, there was a pretty full understanding of what the CIA was doing,” he said. “And the reaction in the room was not just approval, but encouragement.”

“[T]here was no objecting, no hand-wringing,” one unnamed official present at the briefings told the *Post*. “The attitude was, ‘We don’t care what you do to those guys as long as you get the information you need to protect the American people.’”

Posturing as opponents of torture, Democrats in the House of Representatives pushed through the Intelligence Authorization Act December 13. The legislation establishes a new intelligence inspector general to audit the activities of all 16 U.S. spy agencies and requires periodic reports on the nuclear programs of Iran and north Korea. It bars the CIA from using waterboarding, sexual humiliation, mock executions, attack dogs, and the withholding of food and medical care. It still needs approval in the Senate.

The White House has threatened to veto the bill on grounds that it would prevent U.S. officials from “conducting lawful interrogations of senior Al Qaeda terrorists to obtain intelligence needed to protect Americans from attack,” according to a statement.

Democratic and Republican critics of the administration argue that the use of torture damages U.S. interests in the “war on terrorism.”

“I maintain my belief that it is harmful to America’s national security because it damages our image so badly and we lose the ideological struggle, which is based on the moral high ground,” said Senator John McCain, a contender for the Republican presidential nomination. He said Washington was engaged in an ideological war with “radical Islamic extremism,” and “if we engage in torture, i.e. waterboarding, we will lose more than we gain.”

Meanwhile, the American Civil Liberties Union has filed a federal lawsuit against Boeing subsidiary Jeppesen Dataplan for its role in flying prisoners accused of terrorism to other countries to be tortured. Five prisoners have told relatives and lawyers that they were tortured as a result. Washington has asked a federal judge to throw out the lawsuit to prevent the release of state secrets.